

## Peter Elbow Writing Questionnaire

Answer each question as a short freewrite in your Writer's Notebook. Aim for a paragraph of at least three to five sentences, although you can certainly go a few sentences longer.

***Remember: You're not writing an essay for each prompt. What you're doing is capturing your first thoughts. Try to keep your paragraphs concise, yet complete.***

### Questions:

- 1) What does writing mean to you?
- 2) What is a writer? Do you think of yourself as a writer? Why or why not?
- 3) Write about someone who was/is important to your writing (teacher, parent, etc.) who was helpful or harmful.
- 4) What are some of the most or least helpful things teachers have done in assisting you with your writing?
- 5) What makes a good teacher of writing?
- 6) Where and when do you like to write?
- 7) Do you write better if you're given a specific prompt, or do you write better when you have choice of the topic? Why?
- 8) What implements do you use and why: pen, pencil, computer?
- 9) Do you need silence or do you prefer to have music on or other people around? Why?
- 10) What are your strengths as a writer and a learner? What are you proud of? Explain.
- 11) What do you want to learn most about writing? What do you need from others to help you learn?

Adapted from:

Elbow, Peter, and Pat Belanoff. A Community of Writers, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000.

## Sample Questionnaire Responses

What is a writer? A writer is someone who creates great works of art through words. A Van Gogh of pens. A Picasso of paper. Highly intelligent and accomplished people who are renowned for their literary prowess. I could never be such a person. I can barely make sense sometimes.

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What does writing mean to me? Truthfully, I've never been fond of writing. Every time I write from my heart, I end up looking like a whiny emo kid. Perhaps that's because the only time I feel like writing is when I'm sad or pissed off, like right now. Writing has always been hard for me, because every English class I've ever taken didn't want me to write how I write. They tried to force me into their style, and my stubborn personality refused to let them and I usually failed the class. I don't write because no one reads it anyways, and if they do they either misunderstand or don't care. And that's depressing.

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A good writing teacher understands that everyone is different and therefore cannot possibly write the same way. People have feelings and need to express them in different ways. A good writing teacher lets you write your way and does not grade according to how they think it should be written.